

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 15, 2001**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, August 15, 2001 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to address items of importance as identified in the committee's previously distributed meeting agenda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Sotomayor called the meeting to order with a review of the agenda. He then directed participants' attention to the minutes of the committee's August 1 teleconference, alerting them to an editorial change he had made in language proposed for Appendix A. Having no objection to the language change, the committee approved the minutes as written. Mr. Sotomayor announced that he had received a response from the NELAC Quality Systems Committee microbiology subcommittee concerning their review of the Chapter 3 biology and microbiology subgroupings for technical training. The subcommittee approved the subgrouping of the biology disciplines and suggested that the microbiology disciplines be split into bacteriology, parasitology, virology, and MPA (Microscopic Particulate Analysis). Mr. Sotomayor also announced that Dr. Ken Jackson had notified him that the Accrediting Authority Workgroup subcommittee on minimum elements of an on-site assessment had met on August 14 with good agreement on the subcommittee's work product. Dr. Jackson noted that the work product would be distributed to the entire Accrediting Authority Workgroup at their next teleconference. If approved by the Accrediting Authority Workgroup, the work product would be submitted to the On-site Assessment Committee to be considered for incorporation into the Document Review (Pre-assessment) and Records Review and Collection (Assessment) sections of Appendix C. There being no further announcements, the committee moved to the next item on the agenda.

**STATUS OF ACTION ITEMS**

Mr. Sotomayor updated participants on the status of action items from the committee's August 1 teleconference as follows:

- **Update of Chapter 5 assessment checklist** - Active - A checklist based on the 1999 NELAC Standard was distributed to committee members by Mr. Charles Dyer. Mr. Sotomayor reminded participants to submit comments on the checklist to Mr. Dyer by September 3, 2001. - included on August 15 agenda for further discussion
- **Discussion of uncertainty** - Deferred until both Mr. Bill Ingersoll and Ms. Marlene Moore are available to participate - Mr. Sotomayor noted that Mr. Ingersoll and Ms. Moore were attending the 2001 Waste Testing and Quality Assurance (WTQA) Symposium.

- **Discussion of Appendix D** - Active - Mr. Sotomayor distributed a list of bulleted discussion topics to participants prior to the meeting. - included on August 15 agenda for further discussion

## **UPDATE OF CHAPTER 5 QUALITY SYSTEMS (QS) ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

Mr. Dyer led discussion of the status of the QS assessment checklist. He noted that he had distributed the latest version of the checklist based on the 1999 NELAC Standard, incorporating comments received from three people. Mr. Dyer also noted that there would be additional changes, citing as examples items pertaining to NELAP accreditation such as the display of certificates and statements accompanying the NELAP logo. The committee then moved to discussion of Mr. Dyer's changes to the version of the checklist distributed prior to the meeting. There was some discussion of the checklist's reference to a deviation curve. Mr. Dyer explained that the deviation curve item addresses what to do if support equipment fails. It was noted that this item does not appear in the 1999 standard. There was also discussion of information concerning quality manuals and related quality documentation that had been inserted into the checklist in response to comments received from the State of New Jersey. Noting that the insertion also does not appear in the 1999 standard, the committee decided to remove anything that is not referenced in the standard.

In discussion of comments pertaining to immediate notification of a laboratory error as required by the last line of Chapter 5 Section 5.5.3.1, the committee noted that finding a potential error and verifying an error are two different processes. It was suggested that the laboratory should only report verified errors to clients whose data quality has been affected. There was discussion of a realistic time frame for notification in writing. Noting that the word "immediately" is categorical, participants suggested that the wording be changed to "administratively possible" or "immediately after verification." Such a wording change would require a change in the language of Chapter 5. Mr. Jack Hall agreed to draft proposed language and distribute it to the On-site Assessment Committee for review. Mr. Sotomayor indicated that he would draft a recommendation to the Quality Systems Committee on behalf of the On-site Assessment Committee once the latter had agreed to the proposed language. He noted that the Chapter 5 committee should be notified that they need to review and make comments on the checklist

Mr. Dyer noted that he would consider the 1999 checklist approved if he had not received additional comments from the On-site Assessment Committee by Friday, August 17, 2001. He also noted that he would send any comments received to the On-site Assessment Committee for their review. The committee gave its approval for Mr. Dyer to present the latest version of the checklist to the Accrediting Authority Workgroup.

## **APPENDIX D**

Mr. Sotomayor introduced the bulleted discussion points that he had distributed to the committee prior to the meeting by noting that the committee must agree on the purpose of Appendix D before proceeding with its development. He noted that the committee would have some direction in how to

revise the appendix once they agreed on its purpose. Participants then moved to discussion of “test method” as documented in a laboratory standard operating procedure (SOP). It was noted that it is not necessarily enough for a laboratory to have written an adequate SOP. The laboratory may have to look back at a specific regulation for a mandated method. It was also noted that we assume that a mandated method produces data of known and documented quality. It was noted that it is not enough for an assessor to verify that an SOP is adequate. The assessor must also verify that the laboratory is following the SOP as written. Appendix D provides three evaluation phases to verify that the laboratory is using the SOP. There was discussion of setting criteria for reviewing calibration and setting minimum criteria for a calibration curve. It was noted that setting these criteria would fall under the auspices of Chapter 5. Participants noted that they did not want to duplicate the information in Appendices A and C.

Mr. Sotomayor expressed his hope that the committee would have reached consensus on the purpose of Appendix D by the next scheduled teleconference. He instructed participants to review his bulleted discussion points and give their reactions by the next teleconference (September 5) or the teleconference after (September 19). He encouraged participants to share their thoughts and ideas by electronic mail, and set a goal for the committee to reach formal agreement within two teleconferences. Mr. Richard Sheibley shared his thoughts concerning the collateral efforts of the Accrediting Authority Workgroup’s on-site subgroup on records review of SOPs and methodologies. Mr. Sheibley suggested that it would be better to work together to focus the effort rather than dealing with an abundance of appendices. He indicated that he would rather work to strengthen the anticipated subgroup work product.

## **CONCLUSION**

With little time remaining, Mr. Sotomayor noted that the committee’s next teleconference would be on September 5, 2001. He indicated that he might not be able to participate in the next teleconference. He thanked everyone in attendance for their input and adjourned as the committee’s allotted teleconference time expired at 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 15, 2001**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Mr. Dyer will submit updated QS assessment checklists to the Accrediting Authority Workgroup for their review. Mr. Dyer will submit the 1999 and 2000 checklists to Ms. Jeanne Hankins for publication on the NELAC Website.	9/5/01
2.	Committee will include issue of uncertainty on agenda for a future teleconference. - Mr. Ingersoll and Ms. Moore to lead discussion.	10/17/01
3.	Mr. Hall will draft proposed language on “immediate” notification of a laboratory error as required by the last line of Chapter 5 Section 5.5.3.1 for review by the On-site Assessment Committee.	8/20/01
4.	Mr. Sotomayor will draft a recommendation to the Quality Systems Committee on behalf of the On-site Assessment Committee concerning proposed language changes to Chapter 5, Section 5.5.3.1.	9/19/01
5.	Committee will review bulleted discussion points and share their thoughts to reach consensus on the purpose of Appendix D.	9/19/01
	Committee will meet via teleconference.	9/5/01

**PARTICIPANTS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 15, 2001**

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